

# **SOCIAL NETWORKING TIMES**

*September 2009 - Cover Story:*

**An interview with Martin Warner, CEO & co-founder of Talkbiznow**

By Farida Mann

I am in the lounge of the oddly situated Soho Hotel in London, a favourite haunt for the creative industries, and the place I was told to meet Martin Warner. You might wonder why I am here? Today, Warner leads the 'free service movement for small business' over the internet, a techie at heart, and well known for controversial visions and opinions on the use of technology in our lives - so how does he fit this culture of Soho? This is the London base of Talkbiznow and a growing area for new tech start-ups in London. Warner is also a film producer and oversees his film financing and production house (Cabo Films) from Soho - okay we get the link. I've wanted to meet Martin Warner for a while, as he is well known in Silicon Valley, and in Europe, but lesser known in his own country and apparently doesn't like interviews and puts in even fewer appearances for journalists.

**Q - I wanted to kick off by asking why the techie world (particularly Silicon Valley) know you very well, but the wider public don't - do you shy away from publicity?**

A - I had never felt that the brand of 'Martin Warner' needed to be visible; I don't crave that kind of attention. I work very hard to put my ideas, and those of others, into action. To create a world where business is fun and inspiring - and doing interviews, public speaking etc are part of developing a business. If you search me on Google, you'll find many interviews, TV stuff and more, it's just I have no interest to group this around my name, more focused on each of my businesses. That said, I am learning that my worlds of technology and entertainment for converging as we speak and my brand is becoming more visible whether I like it or not.

**Q - Why did you decide to move in on the social networking market?**

A - I was fascinated 4 years ago that more and more people were spending more time on the internet in these communities that we were calling social networks. I was clear to me that the market for pure 'social interaction', was developing fast and becoming monopolized by a few big players, then there was LinkedIn that focused on 'professional networks', but a true business network that solved problems for small businesses hadn't been established - it was here that decided to create a new market. Bringing the fragmented world of business-to-business and professional networking together - we created Talkbiznow.

**Q – How does Talkbiznow differentiate itself from LinkedIn and other professional/business networks?**

A – Well, LinkedIn is great, it focuses predominantly on services that enable business professionals to create a professional network – be it to get a job, find a customer etc. This is very useful in today’s market. Talkbiznow has created a large suite of ‘free’ business services for the wider business community – be it for professionals themselves like networking, or broader services for the small to medium sized business market – such as conference calling or hosting web conferences and much more. We have created a new business networking space which is all about empowering businesses to run themselves more effectively online for free! Great for the small business market.

**Q – What is your strategy as to delivering ‘free’ services to the business professional, and how will you make money?**

A – We often get asked this, we do not intend to charge for our core free services – we don’t believe in it. There are three ways we make money, firstly a new service that enables professionals or businesses to create their own business storefront – think of it like a highly dynamic website on one page with payment processing, Secondly, we make money from partner fees further up the supply chain, gained from members using our services, and finally, from corporate advertising.

**Q – What are the most popular services that members are using on Talkbiznow?**

A – Members love creating free adverts about their business and products. We are the first site to offer free community advertising, and its take off well. Equally, web conferencing (webinars) and voice conferencing are very popular too. Clearly, most members are consistently finding new relationships, and thus business networking suite of services are being used in every members experience.

**Q – What is next for Talkbiznow, and new exciting services we should know about?**

A - We call it Webstore. Enabling our members to create their storefront, be a company, product, service, charity, event, or personal profile that is reachable beyond the community (or walled garden). A unique, non technical experience to market yourself. It’s going to change the way we think of websites.

**Q - What is expected of you as the CEO?**

A – I set the vision for the company, play a key role with my co-founder in recruiting key talent, and set the corporate strategy for our business. I am deeply passionate about the product and the technology itself, and play a role in design, by Chairing our Design Committee.

**Q – How do you manage this along with your other businesses?**

A – Many hours, and a sleep problem. It's very clear, this is my full-time job as CEO, I have made and continue to make investments elsewhere, particularly in the film business, and I chair a number of other companies. Having great people around you is the vital ingredient to spending your time smartly.